



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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AS 2004 SESSION ADJOURNS, THERE ARE NOTABLES SUCCESSES AND SOME DISAPPOINTING FAILURES

The 2004 Legislative Session officially adjourned at 6 p.m. on Friday, and I am proud of the work that we accomplished in the last five months.

Lawmakers succeeded in passing an \$18.8 billion balanced budget that includes additional funds for both Missouri Southern State University and Crowder College. Additional money will go toward elementary and secondary education as well.

Other bills approved include a measure that will set up a DNA database for everyone convicted of a felony, another that will provide property tax relief for senior citizens and a bill that restricts billboards advertising sexually oriented businesses.

I succeeded in passing Senate Bill 1080, which will make a variety of improvements to the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), bringing Missouri's educational standards into line with the new requirements established under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The current MAP test categorizes proficiency as above students' current grade level. That standard led to about half of Missouri's schools failing to make "adequate yearly progress" under the federal No Child Left Behind law. Failing to make progress for several years can lead to penalties, including a requirement that children be allowed to transfer to other schools.

Senate Bill 1080 will require that by June 30, 2006, the State Board of Education align the performance standards of the MAP test so that the performance standards meet, but do not exceed, the performance standards of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam.

Amended onto this bill was language from another bill I sponsored, Senate Bill 768, which establishes new qualifications for the Board of Governors of Missouri Southern State University – Joplin. Five voting members will be selected from Missouri's Workforce

Investment Area Southwest region, which includes: Barton, Jasper, Newton, McDonald, Dade, Lawrence and Barry counties, with no more than three coming from any one county. Two voting members will be selected from any other county in the state.

Approval was given to Senate Bill 942, which will transfer ownership of the National Guard armories in Neosho, Pierce City and Salem to those city governments.

The armories are a vital part of each of these communities, and by allowing the city's to assume ownership the facilities will get a whole new life.

I served as the Senate handler for House Bill 1599, which establishes the Joint Committee on Waste, Fraud and Abuse, to analyze government inefficiencies and recommend changes.

In addition, I was able amend onto this bill legislation that I sponsored, Senate Bill 1370, which will require contracts for energy conservation measures in public buildings to meet certain requirements.

Senate Bill 769, which I sponsored, and House Bill 895, for which I served as Senate handler, are identical bills that will allow Jasper County, upon voter petition, to disincorporate a special road district.

I am disappointed that the matter of tort reform is still unresolved.

While the General Assembly passed a tort reform bill, Gov. Holden vetoed the legislation in April. The House of Representatives fell 12 votes short of a veto override.

Workers' compensation fell victim to time constraints. Senate leadership met with representatives from business and labor throughout this last week, but a compromise could not be reached in time for adjournment.

Both of these issues will play a major role in 2005, when they will hopefully be passed and signed into law.

This legislative interim will be a busy time for me as the Subcommittee on Competition and Privatization, which I chair, will hold meetings throughout the state.

It is an honor to serve the people of the 32nd District and I look forward to working closely with all of you during the future. In the coming weeks, you will receive an end-of-session report that will go into more detail about the 2004 legislative session.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Now that the regular session and veto session is complete, future Capitol reports will be sporadic and sent when needed.

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